

PARKS AND RECREATION

Highlights

- ♦ In 2003, there were over 3,600 acres of parks and facilities in Chesterfield County – more than double the 1994 acreage.
- ♦ The largest current deficiency of park acreage is in neighborhood parks. 253 acres of neighborhood parkland (29 new parks) will be needed by 2020.
- ♦ 180 acres of community parkland (7 new parks) will be needed by 2020.
- ♦ 354 acres of regional parkland (3 new parks) will be needed by 2020.
- ♦ Renovation and upgrades of aging facilities will be increasingly needed.
- ♦ Development or expansion of 3 large and 5 small gymnasiums will be needed by 2020.
- ♦ Increased system diversity is needed, beyond traditional parks and recreation facilities.

Introduction

This section of the Plan relies on the time frame, analysis and recommendations included in the recently adopted Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Master Plan recommendations extend to the year 2020. Generally, community athletic needs are being well served. Until recently, the county has focused primarily on acquiring and developing parks, improving active recreation, and developing passive (non-athletic) areas. Because much of the park system is over 25 years old, the major issue with active (athletic) recreation at this time is renovating aging facilities. While there is a high level of satisfaction with county parks and recreation programs and facilities, community feedback has revealed an interest in a broadened focus and greater diversity of facilities and programs. The trends evidenced in these changes are supported by the findings of the Master Plan. The demand for facilities such as greenways, trails, special purpose parks associated with historic resources, open space, and conservation areas is expected to continue to increase.

Existing Facilities and Resources

County Parks: The parks and recreation system has grown considerably over the past decade, from 1,657 acres in 1994 to 3,777 acres in 2003. Most recent growth has been in special purpose/conservation parks.

Existing Parks	1994 (acres)	2003 (acres)
Community Parks/Athletic Complexes	383	490
Neighborhood Parks	316	284
Regional Parks	774	1,145
Special Purpose/Conservation Parks	184	1,858
Total	1,657	3,777

Acreage declined at neighborhood parks due to a reclassification based on acreage. Parks listed above include limited access facilities at schools. Total acreage includes 85 acres of parkland leased by the county.

Level of Service

The overall goal in identifying sites for acquisition of new parkland is to meet level of service standards in advance of population growth. The Master Plan included a level of service analysis. This analysis considered park service-radius coverage by census tracts to determine existing park deficiencies. The following standards were used:

Park Type	Size Range (acres)	Locational Criteria	Service (radius)	Population Service Standard
Neighborhood	5 – 20	<i>Parks:</i> n/a <i>Athletic Facilities:</i> same as elementary and middle schools	1 – 1.5 miles	1.5 acres / 1,000 persons
Community	20 – 99	<i>Parks:</i> easily accessible to major roadway systems in the service area <i>Athletic Facilities:</i> Co-located with middle and high schools where possible	2 – 4 miles	2 acres / 1,000 persons
Regional	100 - 500	Easily accessible land connected to major countywide roadway system	3 – 5 miles	4.5 acres / 1,000 persons

Facility Purposes (Background/Analysis)

Regional Parks provide active and passive recreational space and facilities for the whole county, playing fields and courts for sports programs, and open space for non-directed activities such as picnicking and nature walks. The ideal size is 100 to 500 acres.

Community Parks provide gathering space, open space, indoor and outdoor active and passive recreational facilities, and playing fields and courts for a wide range of sports activities to serve the surrounding community. Community parks are co-located with schools where possible. The ideal size is 20 to 99 acres. Full access facilities are available to the general public whenever the facility is open. Limited access facilities are not always available to the general public.

Neighborhood Parks provide passive recreational facilities and open space for several residential neighborhoods and can also include active recreational facilities and playing fields. Neighborhood parks serve the same areas as an elementary or middle school and should be located on a site shared with an elementary or middle school where possible. These parks can also be co-located with special purpose parks when recreational uses are compatible. The ideal size is 5 to 20 acres.

Community Buildings provide indoor recreational space and community gathering space for a wide range of activities to serve the surrounding community, with specialized facilities to serve the entire county.

Special Purpose Parks preserve and interpret unique recreational, cultural, or environmental resources for the benefit of county residents as well as residents of surrounding regions and are located on sites with historical, ecological, or cultural significance. Special purpose parks are centered on conservation, preservation and compatible passive recreation. Because traditional recreational facilities are not provided, this park acreage is not included in level-of-service standards based on population, unless these parks also meet a neighborhood park need.

Additional County Resources (Background/Analysis)

Green Infrastructure: Interconnected networks of natural areas and conservation lands support native species, maintain natural ecological processes, sustain air and water resources, and contribute to public health and quality of life make up the county's green infrastructure. These include county lands such as the 809-acre Dutch Gap Conservation Area, but also include state, federal and privately held lands.

Blueways: The county has over 95 miles of riverfront along its border that has been used for transportation, recreation and commerce for thousands of years. Although this recreational amenity is currently available to county residents, there is great potential for development of interpretive trails, campsites, and environmental education opportunities.

Bikeways: An extensive on-street bike-trail system is being developed through the Chesterfield and Virginia Department of Transportation. In addition to bike lanes constructed by the Department of Transportation, the State provides five miles of trails at Pocahontas State Park. More of these types of connections are essential to reduce congestion and provide travel alternatives that promote physical fitness. The county Bikeway Plan allows for paved-shoulder bike lanes to be added with new construction or improvements along designated routes. Shared-use paths (bike lanes physically separated from traffic) may be developed as recommended by the Linear Parks/Greenway Plan.

Scenic Byways: Parts of Robious, Genito, and Old Gun Roads have been designated as Virginia Byways or scenic roads, which means they have significant aesthetic and cultural values, and lead to or lie within an area of historical, natural, or recreational significance. Scenic Byways are important not only for the quality-of-life benefits; they also offer a recreational opportunity to a segment of the population that does not participate in other types of recreation. Charter Colony Parkway and Winterfield Road have been designated as connectors to scenic roads.

Historic Resources: Chesterfield County's rich cultural history is a resource that provides both a tangible link to the past as well as an intangible sense of identity for all residents. Future facility acquisition and development should consider the benefits provided by incorporating historic sites and structures into the parks and recreation system.

Public Schools: Cooperation with the county school system in the acquisition, development, and maintenance of jointly used facilities is a positive relationship that benefits both the schools and the park system. Currently, the Recreation Division utilizes many county schools in some capacity. The majority of use is concentrated at the elementary and middle school level. A portion of this school acreage is used to calculate service standards.

Findings

The Master Plan analysis utilized customized standards to match specific needs in Chesterfield County for future facilities. The Master Plan needs assessment includes renovation of existing facilities and new/expanded facility needs.

Renovation of Existing Parks and Facilities: As facilities increase and age, park replacement and renovation shortfalls will increase. If the county is to maintain the current

quality of service and keep up with the growing demand for new facilities, annual funding will need to be appropriated for timely renovation and replacement of facilities.

Community Centers and Indoor Athletic Facility Needs: There are increasing demands for indoor athletic facilities as well as non-athletic programming. School facility use is only a partial solution due to lack of availability of the schools during the weekdays. Community centers are proposed to meet a range of indoor space needs. Five facilities (20,000 square feet each) would supplement indoor space needs at the neighborhood level. These facilities generally would provide meeting rooms and a gymnasium. Three larger facilities (30,000 square feet each) would also provide space for an auxiliary gym or auditorium.

Trails: Shortfalls have been identified in all types of public use trails. Trail development on park sites will not address all identified trail shortfalls. The county will pursue other opportunities for recreational trail development, including use of abandoned railroad right-of-ways, utility right-of-ways, and floodplain trail development along rivers, creeks and their major tributaries. The county will continue to work through the zoning process to acquire land or easements needed to provide trail connections.

Water Access: Shortfalls have been identified in all types of facilities and activities for water access and viewing: boat ramps, canoe launches and providing river and stream access. These demands will be met by implementing existing master plans for park sites on the James and Appomattox Rivers, and Lake Chesdin, through targeted new access. Stream use and access should be concentrated on Swift and Falling Creeks and their tributaries.

Neighborhood Parks: The largest deficiency is in neighborhood park facilities. The county is 199 acres short of the neighborhood park level of service standard. By 2020, this shortfall will grow to 253 acres. The Master Plan recommends 29 new neighborhood parks by 2020. Neighborhood park development will be addressed by acquisition of parkland, and acquisition and development of neighborhood athletic parks (associated with schools or special purpose park sites). The county will partner with local civic groups and developers to construct and maintain neighborhood parks. Targeting development of trails, picnic shelters and playground facilities at these sites will address shortfalls in these types of facilities. Neighborhood parks may incorporate historic resources.

Neighborhood Parks (Background/Analysis)

Even counting parcels owned by neighborhood association, many neighborhoods have little open space close to home. Eleven census tracts do not have designated open space (defined as county-owned park and school parcels or neighborhood-association-owned parcels). These areas would be the highest priority for neighborhood park development, followed by tracts with only one or two designated parcels. The county must take a more active role in providing open space at the neighborhood level to ensure residents in older or lower-income communities are served.

Community Parks: Although community parkland is currently adequate to meet level of service standards, there are still many underserved areas. During the next 20 years, this

deficiency will grow to 252 acres overall. Seven new parks, at average size of 36 acres each, will be needed by 2020.

Regional Parks: Regional parkland is currently adequate to meet level of service standards. Three new regional parks, with a combined land area of 354 acres will be needed by 2020. In areas of the county where large tracts of land may not be available for purchase or are cost-prohibitive (such as the northern Midlothian area), substituting multiple community scale parks for the regional park may be the only practical solution.

Special Purpose Parks: The Master Plan identifies the need for five new special purpose parks along the James and Appomattox rivers, and to develop and expand five existing parks during the next 20 years. Special purpose parks preserve and interpret unique recreational, cultural or environmental resources and new parks may be added to proposed sites if determined to be of significant value through future studies.

Other Parks and Recreation Needs (Background/Analysis)

Team Sport Needs: The most pressing athletic field need is for lighting. Available fields can be lighted and upgraded as a cost-effective method to meet demands. Fields also need to be upgraded (fencing, turf, irrigation, and drainage) to bring facilities up to standards. Expansion of existing, undeveloped park sites and acquisition of new parkland will handle projected growth in athletic facility needs. Upgrades to existing facilities will be based on the ratio of participants to facilities and targeted to areas of the county where demand is greatest. This approach will address both current and projected field time for team practices. In some cases, new fields will have to be built at existing sites to handle critical areas where existing facilities do not meet demands.

Other Organized Athletics: Shortfalls for tennis courts, tournament-quality athletic facilities and volleyball courts were identified. Demand for tennis and volleyball can be met with additions to existing parks and as a standard component of new park development. A tournament-quality sporting events facility is best approached in partnership with the private sector.. An indoor arena of size to handle small concerts and high school graduations, another identified need, could be a part of this facility or provided through an expanded community center.

Individual Sports: Shortfalls were identified for equestrian rings, golf courses and skate-based recreation. Demand for additional equestrian rings and golf courses should be handled through the private sector. The Fairgrounds Park provides sufficient public equestrian rings for the foreseeable future. Supervised skate parks for in-line skating and skateboarding should be constructed at existing park or school sites, or through partnerships with the private sector, and geographically distributed across the county.

Conservation/Preservation Areas: Shortfalls were identified for environmental/nature centers and recreational historic sites. Demand for environmental/nature centers can be met by expansion of the Rockwood Center and new centers at the Dutch Gap Conservation Area and Horner Park. Mobile centers using boats on the rivers could be used to meet demands.

Future sites should be acquired on a case-by-case basis as a unique land resource becomes available. Historic sites should only be developed as deemed appropriate to the importance of the resource.

Historic and Cultural Resources: Sites throughout Chesterfield County have important historic or cultural significance. These include Native American and early English settlement sites, as well as 19th Century structures, Civil War defense works, and early 20th Century structures. The Introduction to the Plan For Chesterfield encourages the identification and preservation of lands, sites and structures that have archeological and/or historic significance. Such identification and protection offers the best opportunities for presenting and interpreting the county's historic and cultural heritage. To this end, the Planning Department, in conjunction with other county and State agencies, private organizations and citizens, is identifying historic and cultural resources throughout the County, assessing the significance and condition of sites and structures, and developing strategies for preserving and interpreting these resources.

Improvements to Existing Parks: Shortfalls were identified for performing arts, picnic shelters and playgrounds. Demand for all these facilities can be met with additions to existing parks. Picnic shelters and playgrounds will be a standard component of new park development. An appropriate number of disabled-access playgrounds should be developed to address this underserved portion of the population. Exhibition facilities are proposed as part of the Fairgrounds Park and a special events area is planned at Horner Park.

Locational Criteria

- Neighborhood parks should serve several neighborhoods, and be five to 20 acres.
- Neighborhood athletic facilities should serve the same site and service areas of elementary or middle schools where possible.
- Community parks should be located on relatively level, primarily green open space easily accessible to major roadway systems serving the park service area. These facilities should be 20 to 99 acres.
- Community athletic facilities should be co-located with middle or high schools, where possible.
- Regional parks should be located on large, unfragmented tracts of relatively level, green, open space, easily accessible land that is connected to major countywide road systems. These facilities should be 100 to 500 acres.
- Special purpose parks should be located on sites with historical, ecological, or cultural significance.

Other Criteria

- Park development should be consistent with Master Plan design criteria.

Recommendations (Maps 3-6)

The following recommendations will further Comprehensive Plan goals for sustaining existing neighborhoods, by emphasizing new park and recreation facility development in areas with comparatively few facilities. In addition, these recommendations will promote orderly development by encouraging new facilities to serve planned growth areas.

Plan Development

- Demand for linear trails, greenways, and blueways necessitates the development of a plan for a linear parks system along with specific strategies for creating the system. This process should be coordinated with other long-range plans and adjacent jurisdictions.
- Perform cultural landscape/historic resources study to determine resources to preserve, enhance, and develop as public parks. Develop a plan for the preservation and compatible use of the historic and cultural resources. Plans need to be developed that include strategies for protecting critical resources and view sheds, with the support of private groups, individuals, and state and federal agencies.

Land Acquisition

- Continue to accept dedications of property through the zoning process, working with the public school system, and direct land purchases to meet the need for more parks.
- Neighborhood parkland acquisition and development should be a cooperative effort with civic groups and developers. Acreage may need to be split among smaller parks in high-density areas.
- Increase acreage in linear parks and open space (priorities to be developed based on the pending Greenways/Linear Park Plan).
- The linear park and open space systems should include riparian areas along the James and Appomattox Rivers, Swift and Falling Creeks, and their major tributaries.
- Increase park acreage around historic properties (priorities to be determined by the pending Cultural Landscape/Historic Resources Plan).

Sports Facility Development

- Build/upgrade 13 baseball/softball fields, 12 football fields, and 18 soccer fields by 2010.
- Add 12 gyms by 2010, through school upgrades, rental, adaptive re-use, increased school access, and new construction of community center and school sites.
- Develop partnerships with the private sector for sports facility development.

General Recreation

- Improve and expand trail systems within existing parks, and acquire new trail lands to significantly increase trails for a variety of users by 2010.
- Add / upgrade play courts (36 tennis and 6 volleyball) at existing parks and include in development plans for new parks, to serve growth areas by 2010. Part of play court demand will be met by the private sector and through development of school sites.
- Support private-sector initiatives for a tournament-quality sports facility/indoor arena.
- Expand Rockwood Nature Center and construct two new environmental/nature centers at conservation areas (one at Dutch Gap, and one at Horner Park).
- Construct five skating facilities throughout the county in partnership with user groups and other partners.
- Construct 19 picnic shelters and 40 playgrounds throughout the county at existing parks and school sites, and as part of new park development.

Community Centers

- Expand community center system for countywide access, and enlarge typical building plans to include indoor gym(s) and large multi-use space.

- Develop three large community centers (two new; one expanded), and five small community centers (four new; one expanded).

Timing of Facility Development

2000-2005

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| a. (Community Park) | Spring Run Athletic Complex |
| b. (Community Park) | Robious Landing Expansion (<i>acquired, pending development</i>) |
| c. (Special Purpose Park) | Lake Chesdin Park |
| d. (Special Purpose Park) | Virginia State University Riverside Trail |
| e. (Special Purpose Park) | Falling Creek Expansion (<i>acquisition pending</i>) |

2000-2010

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| f. (Neighborhood Parks) | 3 Parks, Midlothian area, north of Route 60 |
| g. (Neighborhood Parks) | 5 Parks, eastern Route 60 / Route 360 interior corridor |
| h. (Neighborhood Parks) | 3 Parks, eastern Route 360 / Route 10 interior corridor |
| i. (Neighborhood Parks) | 6 Parks, Route 10 / Route 301 interior corridor |
| j. (Neighborhood Park) | River Road |
| k. (Neighborhood Parks) | 3 Parks, Ettrick area |

2005-2010

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| l. (Regional Park) | Winterpock |
| m. (Community Park) | Green Springs |
| n. (Community Park) | Belmont/Hening/Meadowbrook (formerly Northern Area) |
| o. (Community Park) | Magnolia Green |
| p. (Community Park) | Pocahontas (formerly Central Area) |
| q. (Special Purpose Park) | Bermuda Hundred (<i>acquired, pending development</i>) |
| r. (Special Purpose Park) | Appomattox Park |
| s. (Special Purpose Park) | Western Lake Chesdin Boat Launch |
| t. (Special Purpose Park) | Rt. 360 & Appomattox Canoe Launch |
| u. (Special Purpose Park) | River Rd. & Appomattox Canoe Launch |
| v. (Recreation Center) | Government Complex Area (30,000 sq. ft. facility) |
| w. (Recreation Center) | Winterpock (20,000 sq. ft. facility) |
| x. (Recreation Center) | Rockwood Park (20,000 sq. ft. facility) |

2010-2015

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| y. (Regional Park) | Northern Midlothian (substituted with three community parks) |
| z. (Recreation Center) | Northern Midlothian (30,000 sq. ft. facility) |
| aa. (Recreation Center) | Pocahontas (20,000 sq. ft. facility) |

2010-2020

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| bb. (Neighborhood Park) | Midlothian area, north of Route 60 |
| cc. (Neighborhood Parks) | 4 Parks, Route 10 / Route 301 interior corridor |
| dd. (Neighborhood Park) | East of I-95 north |
| ee. (Neighborhood Park) | Skinquarter |
| ff. (Neighborhood Park) | South Chester |
| gg. (Recreation Center) | Ettrick Park Expansion (30,000 sq. ft. facility) |

2015-2020

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| hh. (Regional Park) | Eastern Matoaca |
| ii. (Community Park) | Harrowgate (formerly South-Eastern Area) |
| jj. (Community Park) | Enon (formerly Eastern Area) |
| kk. (Recreation Center) | Enon (20,000 sq. ft. facility) |
| ll. (Recreation Center) | Bensley Expansion (20,000 sq. ft facility) |

Note: Special purpose parks preserve and interpret unique recreational, cultural or environmental resources and new parks may be added to proposed sites if determined to be of significant value through future studies.

Public Facilities Plan: Neighborhood Parks

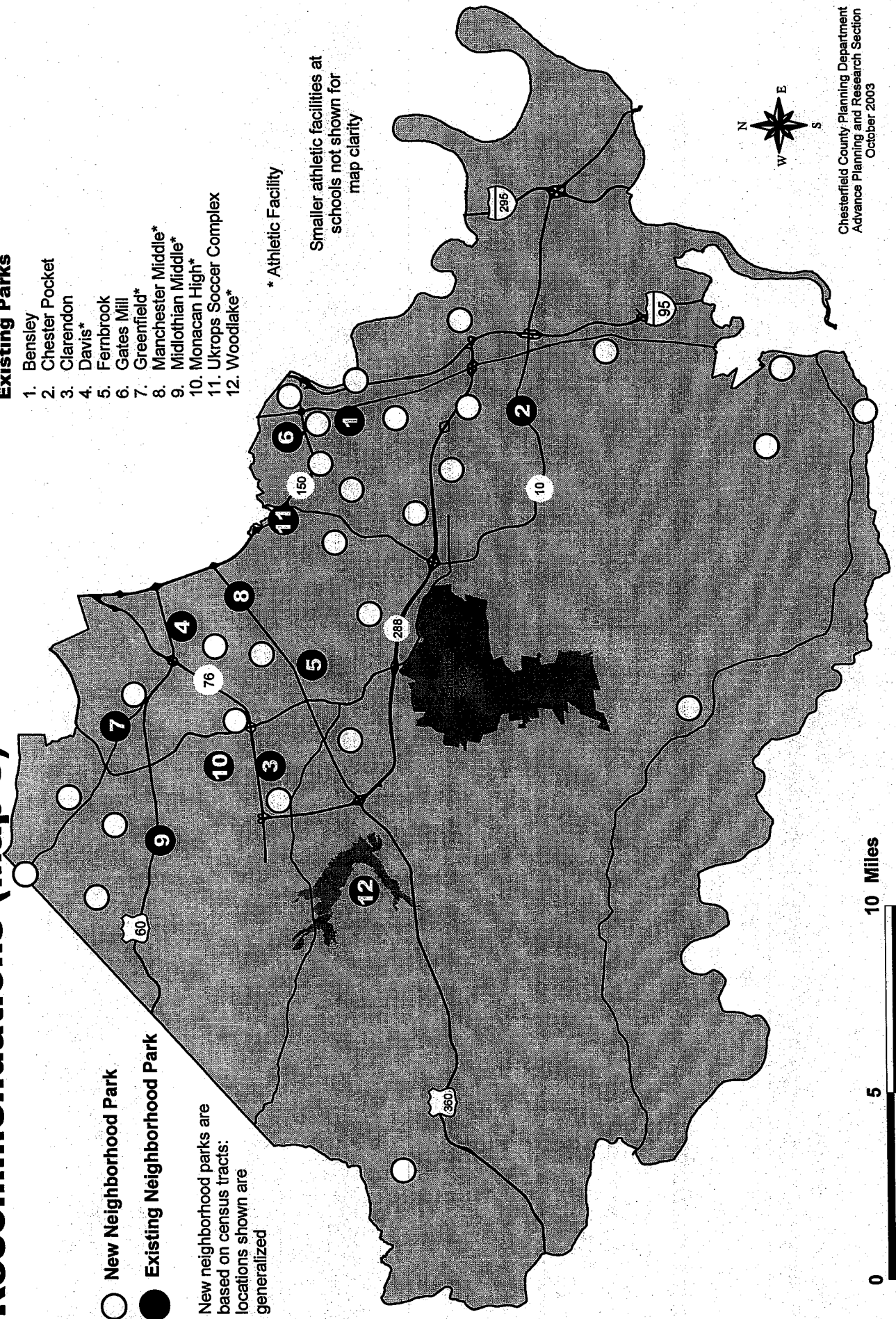
Recommendations (Map 3)

Existing Parks

1. Bensley
2. Chester Pocket
3. Clarendon
4. Davis*
5. Fernbrook
6. Gates Mill
7. Greenfield*
8. Manchester Middle*
9. Midlothian Middle*
10. Monacan High
11. Ukrops Soccer Complex
12. Woodlake*

* Athletic Facility

Smaller athletic facilities at schools not shown for map clarity



○ New Neighborhood Park

● Existing Neighborhood Park

New neighborhood parks are based on census tracts: locations shown are generalized

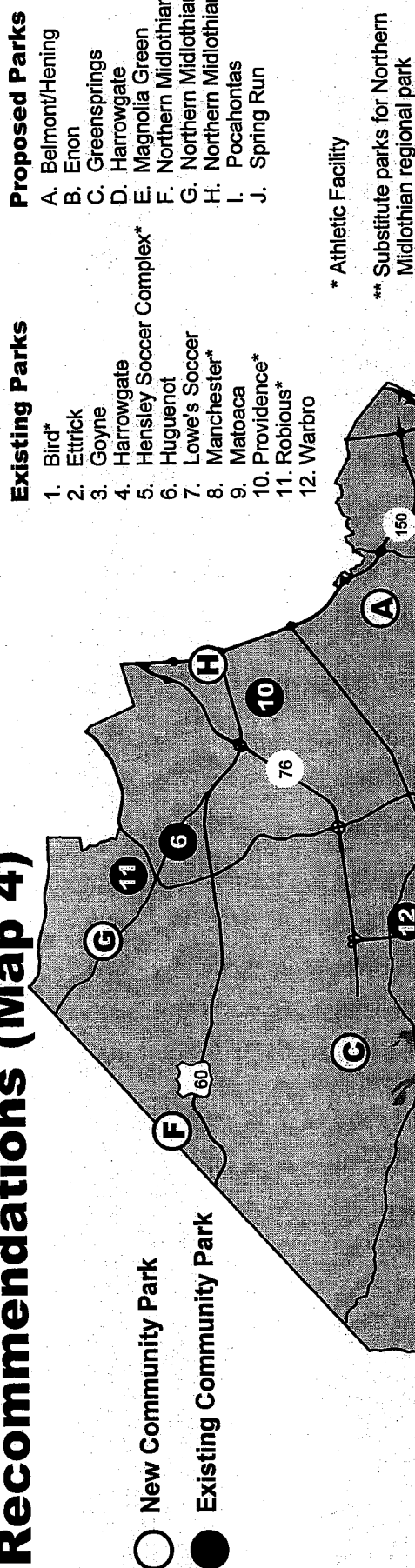
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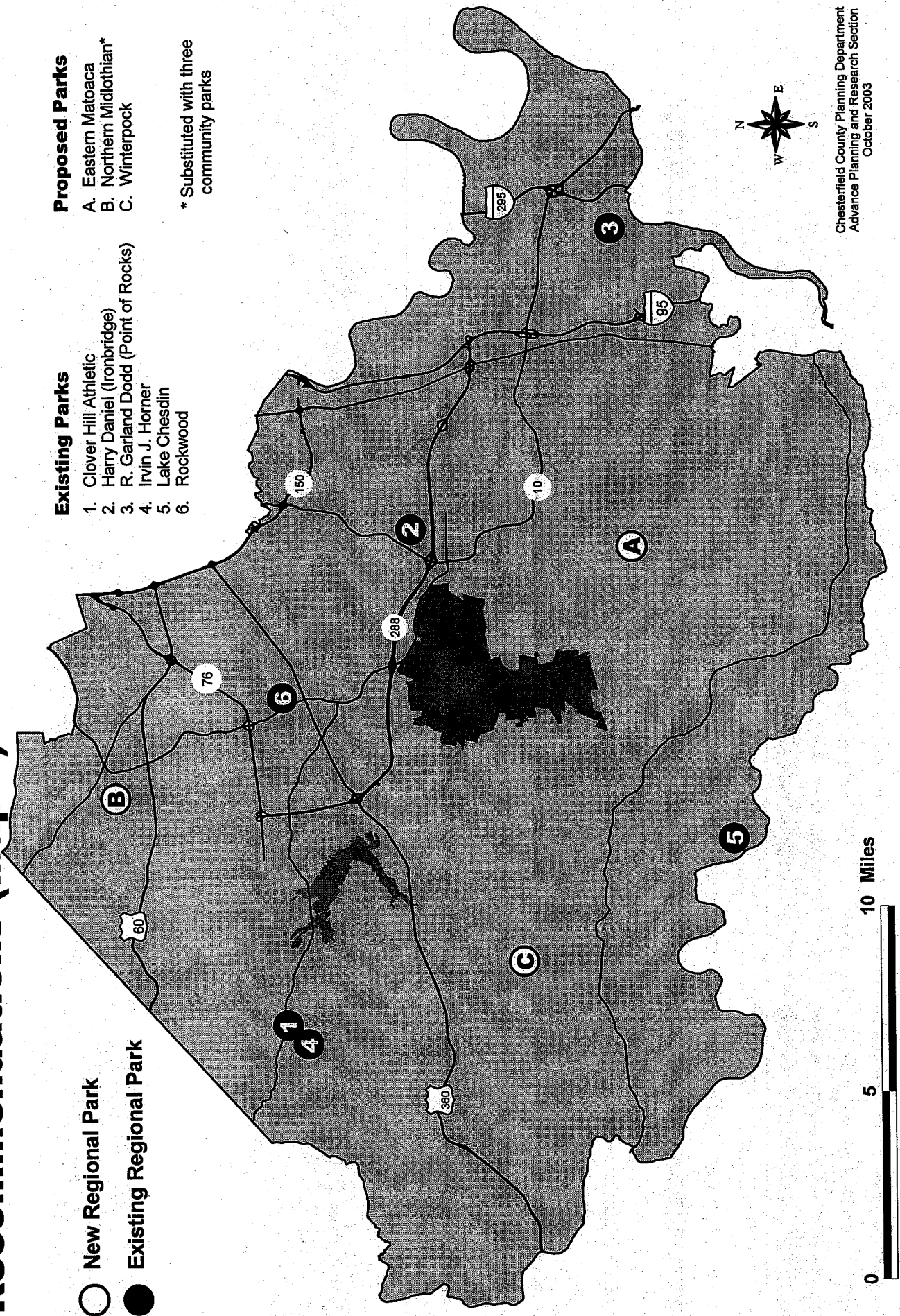
Chesterfield County Planning Department
Advance Planning and Research Section
October 2003

Public Facilities Plan: Community Parks

Recommendations (Map 4)



Public Facilities Plan: Regional Parks Recommendations (Map 5)



Public Facilities Plan: Special Purpose Parks Recommendations (Map 6)

